

CGA Government Administration and Elections Committee
February 22, 2023 Public Hearing
Testimony Submitted by Yvonne Senturia, Election Law Specialist

Support for:

**HJ No. 1 RESOLUTION APPROVING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW
NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING**
**SJ29 RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW
NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING**
SB1057 AAC THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND EARLY VOTING
SB1064 AAC THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY VOTING
HB5004 AA IMPLEMENTING EARLY VOTING

Conditional Support for:
HB6693 AAC ABSENTEE VOTING

Opposition to:
SB713 AAC THE DISCLOSURE OF ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut is a nonpartisan, statewide organization committed to effective public policy, the active involvement of citizens in their government and improving the electoral process. We appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on bills before you today.

**HJ No. 1 RESOLUTION APPROVING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW
NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING**
**SJ29 RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW
NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING**

The League believes that every citizen's right to vote should be protected and every effort should be made to encourage voter participation. The League supports measures which assure that absentee ballot privileges are available to all electors—voters with disabilities, demanding work schedules, limited mobility, child and/or elder care responsibilities or a lack of reliable transportation should be able to carry out their civic duty by voting absentee without an “excuse”. During the 2021 regular session, the General Assembly approved by a majority, but less than the required three-fourths, of the total membership this proposed resolution for Connecticut to join 35 other states that allow no-excuse absentee voting.

The League supports HJ No. 1 and SJ29 that would approve the amendment to the state constitution, to vest the General Assembly with the authority to permanently remove the need for an eligible voter to have an excuse to obtain an absentee ballot.

SB1057 AAC THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND EARLY VOTING
SB1064 AAC THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY VOTING
HB5004 AA IMPLEMENTING EARLY VOTING

Currently absentee balloting is the only form of early voting allowed in Connecticut. Connecticut is one of only four states that do not offer in-person early voting options. The League believes that every citizen's right

to vote should be protected and encourages efforts to maximize voter participation through early voting. On November 8, 2022, Connecticut voters delivered a mandate to the legislature regarding early in-person voting. It is now time for the legislature to make early voting a reality in Connecticut.

To provide more flexibility and accessibility to enhance voter participation, we would highlight the following characteristics of the three bills under consideration: (a) at least 10 days including two weekends as well as early morning and evening hours important for shift workers and caretakers (b) convenient locations accessible by public transportation for working families, disabled populations and others with mobility and time constraints (c) minimum number of polling places based on population to guarantee fair access in all towns (d) public education so that voters understand where and when they can vote (e) annual training on early voting processes and procedures overseen by the office of the Secretary of the State to ensure uniformity across municipalities.

Due to the challenges and complexities of the development and implementation of a statewide early voting program, it is vital that the State of Connecticut provide significant funding for all aspects of this expansion of voter access throughout the state. There must be sufficient funding to enable towns to hire the necessary personnel, provide the necessary voting locations and safely secure the ballots through Election Day.

The League supports the careful implementation of early in-person voting, using elements of SB1057, SB1064 and HB5004. The League strongly believes that improved voter access encourages more voter participation in the democratic process.

HB6693 AAC ABSENTEE VOTING

The League believes that every citizen's right to vote should be protected and encourages efforts to maximize voter participation. This bill would further that effort by allowing within a certain period of time for absentee ballots that have been opened but found to be lacking a signature or other required information to be returned to the Registrars so they can reach out to the voter and give them an opportunity to correct the ballot if desired or vote in-person. We would however question the rationale for allowing personal details contained in absentee ballot **applications**, to be subject to public disclosure and scrutiny.

*The League supports HB6693, with the recommendation that the public disclosure of absentee ballot applications is NOT necessary and is of no benefit to the voter. **We do support** allowing a period of limited ballot curing which decreases disenfranchisement and therefore increases voter representation.*

SB713 AAC THE DISCLOSURE OF ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS

As noted above, we would question the rationale for allowing personal details contained in absentee ballot **applications**. The bill as written provides no justification for this public disclosure and scrutiny of **applications**. *The League therefore can not support SB713, which would appear to allow the disclosure of personal information with no apparent benefit to the electoral process.*

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on these bills.